

Wader Quest support for the Aves Limícolas Project

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Tanigwá Beach — Marcio Motta; Projeto Trinta-réis



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Every summer, more than 200,000 vehicles leave São Paulo, the most populous city in Latin America, and head for the coast. There they will spend their holidays so it is easy then to imagine that every inch of sand will be occupied by bathers, cars, paragliders and dogs, with no room or peace for the waders.



Ubatuba beach, coastal São Paulo, Brazil © Elis Simpson

However there is a small oasis, a strip of sand of 7 kilometres sandwiched between Atlantic forest on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other, where flocks of hundreds of terns and waders gather to rest, feed and to bathe in the streams that flow into the sea. During migration, several species from North America coexist with the resident American Oystercatchers *Haematopus palliatus*, Collared Plovers *Charadrius collaris* and Southern Lapwings *Vanellus chilensis*. In the mornings, deer and peccaries feed in the undergrowth that covers the dunes. At night, Crab-eating Raccoon *Procyon cancrivorus* and Crab-eating Fox *Cerdocyon thous* search for food, always on the look out for Cougars *Puma concolor* and Ocelots *Leopardus pardalis*.

This almost unlikely oasis is called Tanigwá Beach, and contains one of the largest expanses of continuous plain forest, in addition some indigenous communities.



Tanigwá Beach — Marcio Motta; Projeto Trinta-réis

Certainly, because it is squeezed between two municipalities, Peruíbe and Itanhaém, which receive a large number of tourists, this beach and its waders are under enormous pressure: several cars use it as a road between the two municipalities, killing the birds that rest there and feed. In addition, because it is an almost pristine beach, people take their dogs for a walk without a leash and paraglider pilots make low flights over the flocks of waders and terns.

So, what have we done to protect this paradise?

Wader Quest Brasil started a campaign to protect Tanigwá Beach on various fronts. One of them is the installation of educational boards funded by Wader Quest, NGOs such as VIVA, Aquarius of Peruíbe and individuals. They are signs that warn of the existence of shorebirds in the region and the dangers that cars and dogs pose to them. With a charming mix of designs provided by Terra Peninsular, Mexico and by the Fundación Inalafquén, from Argentina, and authorised by local council, we are installing these displays along all the beaches of the region.



Information boards—Karina Ávila

The initiative was well received by the local population, which is beginning to pay more attention to waders. It's very nice to see people coming to take pictures with the signs, it's as if they had become the new tourist attraction of the town. Not only do residents and tourists take an interest, but local managers saw this initiative as an important tool for environmental education.



The information boards have become a tourist attraction — Karina Ávila

A whole campaign was then started for the installation of the displays along the central coast of the state, starting with *Projecto Trinta-Réis*, which installed the displays using the Terra Peninsular model. Despite the pandemic, we are managing to organise these actions through virtual meetings and working groups.

Dogs on the beach are a global problem, which requires perseverance, patience, public policies and an educational campaign that is inclusive. That's why Wader Quest Brasil created the campaign "My dog is a bird hero", an idea that arose from what we learned during the "Workshop of Community Engagement and Reduction of Disturbances on Waders", in which we participated at the invitation of Dr Juliana Bossi de Almeida, of the Migratory Birds Program of SAVE Brasil.

The campaign grew, thanks to the bird working group of the Marine Environmental Protection Area of the Central Coast, where we decided to publicise the "Ten reasons not to take your dog to the beach" campaign. In this we explain that in addition to the risks to waders, dogs can contract various diseases such as *verminosis* and skin diseases. The main idea is that dog owners learn to love birds as well, in addition to their dogs. The virtual dissemination gained strength with a raffle on Instagram, where people who advertise and tag friends can win a kit with collar, guide, book, t-shirt etc. Outside the virtual world, the campaign brings awareness to dog owners on the



Flyers for dog owners — Karina Avila



beach, where we show them the birds and explain to them that we need to share the beach with coastal birds – we also hand out flyers, brochures and stickers.

What we noticed was that people often take their dogs to the beach because they do not know the risks they pose to birds and because they do not have, at least in the municipalities between which Tanigwá Beach is inserted, alternative places for their dogs to exercise. That's why we're trying to create a place in the town where dogs can have fun, with water, shade and toys, so that their owners never have to take them to the beach again. The problem though goes beyond dogs with owners, as there are many abandoned dogs that attack birds. In partnership with the Zoonosis Centre and other local institutions, we are gradually removing these dogs from the beach, performing castration, bathing, deworming and placing them up for adoption.